THE STORY OF THE UINTAH BASIN

Advancement Retarded. Progress Made only by a Few Under Handicaps. Implied Federal Aid Never Given.

In view of much in this issue other phases of our simple story in this basin should be told. We here all know (but many readers may not know) that all this Utah sector, nearly, except Ashley valley, was an Indian reservation until by proclamation of Theodore Roosevelt, then president, it was opened for settlement in 1905.

The federal government gave this "opening" wide publicity, literature was printed and scattered over the country, and under such conditions thousands of people came to take homesteads. President Roosevelt's proclamation, as we are advised, porovided for construction of reservoirs jointly by the Indian bureau and the reclamation service. This was never done.

Nearly one million dollars was spent in reclaiming 77,000 acres of the Indian lands, and on the assumption that there were 1980 Indians. But an adult later revealed the fact that there were not over 1200 natives, including the few of mixed blood. This over-estimation of Indians gave a surplus of farm lands, and some of it that was sold by advertising each week in local papers seventeen and eighteen years ago, describing the land, the cost, name of the Ute, etc. We do not know how much suc hland was sold.

By 1908 a few schools had been opened under trying conditions, although many had taken up residence on their homesteads by spring of 1906. For several years the usual condition was no culinary water, hence, no water for gardens and livestock. People came from Price in four days, or more, and Grand Junction, Heber City, and Kamas, were the other starting places from which people drove into the "Happy Home Land."

Charges for the filing were not very low, about $50.00, we are told, and a land office fee of $16.00. A petition was circulated we are advised, asking that Indian and other reclamation be kept separate.

Information given us is that it was the original intention of the government to reclaim all the best lands, charging the white people for actual cost. Some advise us that such a large development did not suit certain forces, especially the power companies, because power would be, under such a joint ownership, sold under government orders.

In the spring of 1910 special investigators were sent here by the U. S. Landoffice, and to consider the reservoir and power site withdrawals. If our information is correct the landoffice field men reported not more than enough water for the Indian lands, and the report was against the joint reclamation, and against the three large reservoirs.

Even railroads did not want to come into a country wherein government ownership and operation controlled so much wealth, although such wealth would be, and is, relatively small if we leave out the forest reserves.

In 1931 petitions were circulated, asking for federal aid on construction of the storage rservoirs as originally planned. It appears that at this time Porter J. Preston, in charge of Colorado river investigations, and Wm. S. Post, director of Indian irrigation, and Leut. John Dean, have been ordered to investigate the matter, and some work has been done.

From the spring of 1906, when homesteaders began their building of log houses on their quarter sections, until today, twenty-five years, progress has been impeped and prevented. Stronger language could be used to fit the terrible handicap which this generation of slow progsess and hope has produced.

This holdin-back process must stop. Unless action be taken the matter will result in more harm to the "forces' that have manipulated the inaction than the good they have enjoyed, because it is really scandal when the facts are brought together in short, or succinct formation.

A strong and self-imposed liability rests on the federal government to give the people of the Uintah Basin a square deal, as was implied, and practically ordered by the government in 1904-05. This implication (if not more) brought people here. Population would not have flowed into such isolation without some reliable assurance of help that would break the bonds, and open up these lands, and this vast wealth.

To make the fohmer reservation just a big cattle and sheep country, for large operators, will not help much to make the Indian independent. But these 1200 Utes, scattered among 10,000 homes kept by their pale face brothers will do it.

As evidence that this policy has been improper and unfair, let us note the Uncampaghre tribe down at Ouray (formerly of the Grand Junction section). Their lands are unplowed, little or no farming done, and Ouray today looks just as it looked forty years ago.

There at Ouray, where Utah's ter resources is exhibited, least is greatest display of land and wadone. About 4,600 feet in elevation, deep soil, ample water, and yet no farming. It is primareval retrogression, if such there be. Green river runs as it did, with little or no attempt to use it. Duchesne and White rivers join the Green there at almost the same point, among the cottonweeds, the mosquito in summer, and the Coyotes in the winter.

Let any fair minded man examine the topography from some good point on Leland bench, or take position on higher ground and use a small telescope, and the picture tells its own story. These wods ae witten unde the stress of adversity and struggle, hence we refer you to the real landscape.

But Ouray is not all. Look at Pleasant Valley, Independence, Blue Bench, Ouray Valley.

If this is not enough travel through our towns and farming districts and feel the pulse of the average man. Like the landscape, the human pulse will tell a story, and in harmony with this effort to portray a summay of injustic and privations, and twenty thousand here.